

Dhamma Studies Bulletin

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

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The Buddha is My Teacher - He Guides My Life

Namo = My adoration

tassa Bhagavato Arahato = to the Buddha who is the Worthy One

Sammā Sambuddhassa = who is the Fully Enlightened One.

Say these words thrice with awareness, understanding and conviction
at least every morning before you start the day.

Dear parents and children. The Buddha, we say, is supreme, i. e. the Buddha is the greatest of human beings in our world of thinking. He excelled all humans and became transcendental or *lokuttara*. He **guides our lives**, yours and mine. He **shows us the way to live as good and noble human beings** and **prevents us from falling into bad ways of life**. He helps us **to get the best results out of our lives, here and now**. He does so to everyone who comes to him and is willing to be corrected. And he offers this guidance to any one, any where in the world: to rich people and the poor, to the mighty and the weak, to the wise and even to the less wise, **without any discrimination about race or religion**. He has no chosen people whom he promises to save or favour in particular.

The Buddha lived in this world, to be more precise in India, more than two thousand five hundred years ago. He became the Buddha or Enlightened One at the age of thirty-five, having left home at the age of twenty-nine, in search of peace for mankind. He had to work very hard, all by himself, to get to this stage. He knew what he wanted. His **departure from household life in the world** was truly a journey of adventure [*anuttaram santivarapadam pariyesamāno*].

He saw the people of the world having to face many problems like disease, old age and death, of losing friends and making enemies, of not being able to keep what they acquire. Quick and unexpected changes of gain and loss disturbed people very much. So did variations of praise and blame, honour and insults. The Buddha's search for Enlightenment was to put an end to all these changes which beset us and which we are not very happy to face. **Work hard and**

you will get what you need. Diligence and intelligence will deliver to you what you are looking for.

After his Enlightenment, the Buddha knew that he had something very valuable to give to the world. He lived another forty-five years, going on foot from town to town, from village to village, delivering his message of peace and good will, **leading people to happiness in this very life and to a more blissful one in the life after**, leading to ultimate liberation in Nirvana.

So **in our hearts and in our homes**, the **Buddha as our Teacher and our Guide** shall come **to occupy a permanent place of reverence and residence**. For the entire duration of our lives, **he shall be a permanent pace-setter within us**. When the calm and peace which we should strive to maintain within us **come to be disturbed by storms of anger, jealousy and rivalry**, or when **our inner fragrance of moral goodness and loving kindness is made foul and awfully stinking** with **bitterness and hatred**, it is the presence of the Buddha **whom we have respectfully installed and enthroned within us who should warn us against such impending disasters**.

It is our convinced awareness of his presence within us, and our being sensitive to the great qualities of love and benevolence which his presence would radiate all the time that would enable us to avert and tide over such disasters. It **is vitally important that first the parents should understand and be convinced** of these aspects of Buddhism and only **thereafter endeavour to transmit them to their children**.

Therefore let the presence of the Buddha in our midst be proudly admitted **by installing an attractive statue or a picture of the Buddha in the home**. Please do not lock him up in a glass cabinet together with other curios and family pictures. It should be in a place and position by itself, **commanding from all members of the household absolute veneration and admiration**. All other decorative commonplace pictures done by all manner of artists, picked up at the market

place for larger or smaller sums of money, must necessarily occupy a second place.

Everybody in the home must feel the presence of the Buddha in their home and his presence must be respected and revered. As a maximum expression of this respect, some body in the home, preferably the mother or the father, as the leaders in the household, **must place some fresh flowers in his presence every day.** Begin your day with this. It may even be a single flower. But it must be daintily offered, delightfully arranged in a sensibly chosen appropriate container.

It is for this purpose that the Japanese people evolved the art of *ike bana* or flower arrangement. and scored a first-ever at world level in that field. With your flower offerings to the Buddha you and your family must win a world score in artistic accomplishment. Let the lady of the house, young or old, make a start and pass this skill down the line to the children. Enhance the beauty of this offering with a light or two, lighting a delightfully selected lamp. These exercises are going to be much more rewarding in the life of a growing up children than learning to swim or playing chess.

This **loving and meaningful nearness to the Buddha** which is brought about **by his personal presence in your home is personal to you.** It will make **your life very much richer** and **the atmosphere in the home much more delightfully fragrant.** Try it and **you would be amazingly rewarded with love and harmony** with everyone around you. The Buddha has a reputation of having trodden in life the path of absolute correctness. There was none with whom he lost his temper. He swore no vengeance on those who offended him. He never kept to himself any right of revenge. Those who erred were never declared to be erring against him, but against themselves. On the Noble Eight-fold Path to liberation, he was always on the Correct Step which is always described as *sammā*-. He was never on the wrong tract. It is for this reason that he is referred to by us even today as the Well-Gone One or *sugato*. His knowledge and conduct went hand in hand. He practised what he preached and preached what he practised. So he was

yathāvādī tathā kāri and *yathākārī tathāvādī*.

May all beings be well and happy.



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Under the Guidance of My Master - The Buddha

[HE IS THE TEACHER OF ALL TERRESTRIAL AND EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL
BEINGS]

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Dear parents and children. The Buddha as teacher is believed to have guided the lives of both the terrestrial [i.e. earthly beings or *manussa*] and the extra-terrestrial beings [or *deva*]. For this reason, he is called *satthā deva-*

manussānaṃ [= teacher of gods and men]. In the **Maṅgala Sutta** which is one of the most popular *parittas* among the Buddhists, [and it certainly should be so], it is recorded that *devas* and *manussas* jointly discussed as to what brings about and promotes **success** and **prosperity** in the lives of people [*maṅgalāni acintayum*].

The devas, thereupon going on delegation to the Buddha, referred the matter to him. In a very clear and definite answer, the Buddha said that it is **an unquestionably virtuous and morally good life-style** as detailed out in the **Maṅgala Sutta** that **brings about triumph in life** among mortals, at **all times** [*sabbattha-m-aparājita*], and **leads to happiness and prosperity** [*sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti*]. Note that all these quotations are from the **Maṅgala Sutta**. [See the author 's **Parittas - For Education and Culture** - Buddhist Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka. 2003].

The **Maṅgala Sutta** presents to all of us - men, women and children - a list of **38 items of good living which, if lived up to and adhered to**, assures us unfailing success **as humans in this very existence**. Mind you **not necessarily in the heavenly worlds, after death**. Buddhism seems to stress this as the **initial and primary service** which a **religion must render to mankind** - getting the **humans to develop their own inner strength which is theirs by right**, without seeking to prop them up by means of animate and inanimate powers which are said to exist outside the plane of human existence and are believed to step in on call at times of need.

The main reason for this approach is that Buddhism **does not operate in a world of make-believe** and **does not expect humans to rely on unseen powers** which dwell in a plane beyond their own existence and experience. " No external power provides you security [*attāno loka*]. None other than your own self guides your destiny [*anabhissaro*] ", says the text in the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya [MN. II. 68].

This is the honesty in the injunctions of the **Maṅgala Sutta** that it requires and expects every one of us who has any acquaintance with the sutta to **take seriously to the practice** of the **ways of life recommended** therein. The sutta which details out these **as stepping stones to success**, winds up with the very emphatic injunction *etādisāni katvāna* which means nothing less than **putting all these into practice in our own lives**.

It is therefore difficult for us to see in this Maṅgala Sutta **any bit of lip service** in its chanting, neither in the grandeur of those who do the chanting, nor in the grandeur of the superstructure associated with the ceremony of chanting. That is just not how **the sutta was meant to be utilised in our lives**. The repeated chanting, every morning and evening as it is evidently done today, with a great deal of soul-stirring fanfare, **must somehow encourage and enforce** the practice **by us of the items** referred to **in the chant**.

The Buddhists must not be merely carried away through the assistance offered by the diverse forms of the media and the commercial circuit like the prolific production of audio-cassettes and CD ' roms and be joyously contended that they **accord perfectly with the religious fashionableness** of the day. The power of the sutta cannot just be encapsulated by the chanters within the piously associated items like the water and the strings used on such occasions.

Yet another point to remember. Perhaps such external powerful factors like the **heterogeneity of contemporary religious and cultural traditions** along with which Buddhism has to travel along in its widespread history, and also perhaps serious regional isolation through time and space, imperceptibly contributed to this.

On the other hand, even a cursory glance at the sutta reveals to us that almost half the number of items referred to therein **relate to qualities of good human behaviour** [*dhamma-cariyā*] which are indispensably necessary in society at any time, in any part of the world. About twenty items aim at **ennobling the personal character of men and women**. This enhancement of personality is seen

to have both an **individual** and **social dimension**. This is the bed-rock of interpersonal relationships built upon the basic morality of Buddhist *pañca-sīla*. This is imperceptibly the **Universal Ethic of Good Living**, without any heavenly strings or divine commands to any specific hand-picked groups.

They relate to down-to-earth life in the world we live in. In a very general survey, we discover items 6, 7, 8 and 9 grooming up an individual specifically in the area of personal accomplishment. He begins by acquiring, through one's own personal judgement, a moral and social steadiness of character [*atta-sammā-panidhi* No.6]. He adds further to the growth of his personality wide learning [*bāhusacca* No. 7] and acquisition of skills in life [*sippa* No.8], both as the foundation and the product of his education. Today, in the world of saner education, these newly introduced values are capable of driving to the garbage bin the outmoded old world concepts like the 3R's of Reading, [W] Riting and [A] Rithmatic through which, we know, generations of humanity have been meaninglessly drilled for long years. The 3 new R's consist of Respect, Responsibility and Readiness to learn.

Relating humans to humans in a diversity of cordial relationships, without subordinating them to unknown powers elsewhere, neither at human nor at divine levels, the Maṅgala Sutta builds up vibrantly vigorous interpersonal relationships, within the **family**, the **community** and the **society at large**. Nos. 11 and 12 begin within one's home, showing the **grateful tender care** of **children for the parents** that begot them - *mātāpitu-upatthānaṃ*. This, we consider, is the biggest ever leap in the direction of developing respect as a virtue in humans.

Callously generating a single parent home, what more civilised reaction can any single parent generate than bitterness and vindictive wild animosity in the mind of a child towards the other parent who stands ruthlessly condemned by the prosecuting parent, who has legally or illegally appropriated custody over a child who tragically stands planted in a no man's land?

Item No. 12 in the Sutta knows a new direction of extension of human love to other grades of its own kind, in return for the benefits one receives from others. This is *putta-dārassa saṅgaho* where a spouse or a parent directs a great deal of love and care to the other party, [not necessarily the giver], in return for the benefits of affection and attention one has already received within the framework of family growth. We Buddhists are more for familial growth of humanity than for individual personal escalation and glorification, crushing everybody around, older or younger within the family circles.

Item No. 16 which deals with reverential treatment of one's kinsmen [*ñātakānañ ca saṅgaho*] contributes a great deal more to this easy consolidation of familial unity. With the indiscreet importation of alien family ethics into our midst in the distant colonial days, we witness today something much worse than the glacial action of the Ice Age in the devastation of our eastern ethics which have had a very solid basis of religiousness underlying them. It is not a day too early in Sri Lanka to think seriously about retrieving them and rebuilding the fast crumbling culture of a people which could still continue to be a source of inspiration for exemplary living.



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Disintegration and Degradation of Religiousness in the Life of a Buddhist

As I proceed with you in our dhamma studies, let me also make available to you from time to time some of the words of caution uttered by the Buddha with regard to possible mishaps that would befall the Sāsana, i.e. his religious dispensation, as a result of the **errors of judgement** and **incorrect behaviour** of those who come to join him as disciples, both monks and laymen.

The Anguttara Nikaya [AN. III. 206] refers to five failings of a lay devotee or **upāsaka** which make him or her a despicable person within the dispensation. These are words of which we are to take serious note and act upon promptly, if we wish to save ourselves and save the dispensation. The five traits of offensive character are that a person

- i. Lacks in trust and faith in his own religious creed [*assaddho hoti*].
- ii. Lacks in personal moral virtue [*dussīlo hoti*].
- iii. Superstitiously holds on to **what is believed to be auspicious and luck-bringing** [*koṭūhalaṃgaṅgaliko hoti*].

- iv. Looks up to self-operative luck. He is no man of corrective action [*maṅgalaṃ pacceṭi no kammaṃ*].
- v. Seeks those worthy of honour **outside his own creed** and **offers them priority of respect** [*īto bahiddhā dakkhiṇeyyaṃ gavesati tattha ca pubbakāraṃ karotī*].

An **upāsaka** who errs in these areas is severely chastised in no uncertain terms. He is a *pariah* in his own category [*upāsaka-caṇḍālo*]. He is also called a blot on the community [*upāsaka-malaṃ*]. He is an outcast, he is a reject [*upāsaka-patikuṭṭho*]. At least in the days of the Buddha or in the true religious atmosphere of the Buddhist community, these words were pungent enough to correct the erring flock.

Besides, **seduction from outside** in the early days of the Sāsana was neither glamorous nor attractive enough to siphon Buddhists out of their well-saddled position. They were more than satisfied with their progress via religion, both in terms of this life and the life beyond this. Nor were the people of the time apparently **that aggressively competitive for social escalation** as they are today, to seek aid from petty alien sources, human or divine. With such fool-proof safeguards built in, it is more than unbelievable that in the course of history these anti-corrosive words have not adequately fallen on the ears of at least the faithful.

These brilliant words are seen lying buried within the pages of the books, while the so-called exponents of the dhamma turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to these and keep blowing a different trumpet, to deliver in return only what is flattering and promising to their supporting patrons.

It is to a very much discerning group that the Buddha decided to address his words: *ye sotavanto pamuñcantu saddhaṃ* = Let those **who have ears to hear** direct their attention. To use a modern idiom, there is undoubtedly a little bit of short-circuiting somewhere, either at the end from where these words are normally expected to emanate or at the receiving end of the over-enthusiastic

credulous believers of today.

In a setting like this, it is lamentable to note in Sri Lanka today that religious veneration of whole families of parents and their young children, including even the much older generation of in-laws on both sides, is skilfully directed with meticulous care on the favour granting self-proclaimed divinities of terrestrial origin. Men, women and children of Sri Lanka seek intimate companionship with them, very much taken up by their flattering remarks and believing in their acts of grace, and the infallibility of the favours they can grant.

In terms of genuine Buddhist thinking, this kind of treacherous Buddhist behaviour falls far below the level of beg, borrow or steal. It is unquestionably an act of betrayal. As clan ethics of a specific creed, one may readily condone them. But not as acts of bigamy in a monogamous society, on the part of Buddhists.

It is tragic if Buddhists have lost their **vision of one man one woman relationship in their religious dedication to their Master**, as the one and only guide in their life. This is much more fundamental than conjugal fidelity which the fashionable men and women of the world today have thrown to the winds. It will be worthwhile checking your own identity on this. *Natthi me saraṇaṃ aññaṃ Buddho me saraṇaṃ varaṃ* [I have no other refuge. The Buddha is my supreme refuge.] These words are no mere expression of an act of lip service to one's Master. In Buddhism, it is a multi-purpose religious wedlock.

Of the other four degrading items in the life of an *upāsaka*, i.e. a Buddhist lay-devotee, two indicate the absence of two vital religious ingredients in his life. One cannot lay any claim to being a Buddhist without a trust in the efficiency of the Master and in the efficacy of the way propounded by him. Whatever scriptural authority one quotes in one's favour, there is no denial whatsoever that this basic trust is what the early Buddhist texts call *śraddhā*.

The early Buddhist text refer to it as *so taṃ dhammaṃ sutvā tathāgate saddhaṃ paṭilabhati* [= He having heard the dhamma, generates trust in the

Master.]. This is the willingness to try it out oneself. Certainly not to test the correctness or otherwise. In here there is no implication whatsoever of a disciple putting the Buddha's teaching through an acid test. It is *appativattiyam*, i.e. irreversible or unassailable. So does the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta tells us. Experience the truth yourself [*ehi passika* = come and see it yourself.]. Nothing else, did the Buddha say to any body.

Based on this virtue of possession of *śraddhā*, the other is the self-improvement in moral graduation called *sīla*. *Dussīlo* implies its absence. No religiousness, whatsoever, grows without it. Can any religious teacher, no matter what his brand name is, meditation master or promoter of *paramattha desanā* [metaphysical interpretation], get his flock anywhere without promoting this basic grounding in *sīla*? Has anybody in Sri Lanka got any sense of priorities in Buddhism today? The recurrent theme in Buddhist graduation is 'Establish your self in *sīla* first, then proceed to the culture of the mind.'

We are prompted today by instant foods, ready-made garments, refrigerators which serve you with no fuss no frost. Your motor cars are fitted with automatic gears and safety air bags. Everything is undoubtedly to your liking. You would indeed have Buddhism also put into that category, to serve you as you need. Those who deal with religion are also willing to do it for you. They are already doing it. They even tell us that they cannot always come out with the truth. Are we not all rushing for a gold at the Olympics, even without a pair of running shoes.

At all temple ceremonies and at state functions, it has been customary to begin proceedings with what is referred to as *Tisaraṇa Pansil*. It is our belief that at these functions, they all know what they are saying. But we are in doubt whether they fully take in the implications of what they say. If it is going to be more than a mere formality, *Tisaraṇa* would require **a complete avowal of faith** in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha as the only guiding principles in the religious life of those who pledge their loyalty in this manner. There cannot be

any subsidiary divinities anywhere in the neighbourhood whose grace and goodwill the state and the people secretly and openly pray for.

Pansil requires wholehearted loyalty to the observance of the five precepts of the *pañcasīla*. In Buddhism, it is undeniably a universal ethic of good living. In the legendary accounts of the Cakkavatti king it is claimed that these are adequate for the successful governance of any state, without the need for any political rivalry for restructuring or demolition. More than the whole of the Fundamental Human Rights of the United Nations is covered by them. Does *Tisaraṇa Pansil* soullessly wielded about in our country ever achieve its goal? Should not the Governments of this country, of whatever colour or complexion they be, step in to vitalise *pañcasīla* in practice?

All they need to do is to begin by inculcating, both at private and public levels, a better respect for all forms of life, including those of animals. The saner and more civilised world from Australia to the USA are all already ahead of us in this move. Their wealth of eloquent literature like *Diet For A Small Planet*, *Beyond Beef*, *Save Animals*, *Animal Liberation*, *Compassion - the Ultimate Ethic* speak enough for this new thinking in the world.

As for the rest of the *pañcasīla*, limitations of time and space at the moment compel us to take them up at a later date. Let us now conclude by showing the world that we in Sri Lanka have been well reminded more than twenty-three centuries ago of the worth of this first precept of the *pañcasīla* **by showing respect to all forms of life**, including those whom we have, through diverse religious sanctions, arrogantly chosen to label as part of our daily food. Think twice and try to re-live your life. It is not a day too early.



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Today I wish to revert to our continuation of the analysis of the Maṅgala Sutta. We cannot afford to go through every single one of the list of thirty eight items. [Personal inquiries, if any, would be gladly entertained.] Let us begin, refreshing our memory with regard to numbers 11, 12 and 16 which are *mātā-pītu-upaṭṭhāna*, *putta-dārassa-saṅgaha* and *ñātakānañ ca saṅgaha*. I presume their meanings are already known to you. If this country is not to perish, drowning in the cultural storm of the day, raging from all directions, the parents in the home, or the grand-parents, if they are still being cared for and looked after, are to transmit these philanthropic values to the younger ones in the home, boys or

girls.

These three integrate our much cherished oriental, or more precisely **Buddhist values of family coherence**. Where do we expect our younger ones to acquire these values from, except via their parents, the ones to whom we believe they are bonded? Buddhism honours parents, calling them the first teachers [*pubbācariyā 'ti vuccare*]. If these values are known to grow healthily in the family, with reciprocal reactions, one would hardly ever discover teenagers, whether boys or boys, violently disagreeing with their parents on the choice of partners at their very young age.

We have often discovered it to be a subversive expression of an endeavour to search for the basic love which they have missed and did not get from their parents at the correct age. Children, at this stage, would throw overboard all peripheral considerations of caste, creed, and religious constraints, [logical or illogical?] which the parents having blundered all the way would strive to enforce on the children who, perhaps rightly feel have not been adequately recognised. Have not the parents totally failed to live up to the items 3 and 4 of the *satara saṅgraha-vastu* of Buddhist family ethics of *attha-cariyā* [counselling] and *samānattatā* [emotional mobility]?

Buddhism has already forewarned parents, i.e. mankind as a whole without any creed loyalties, more than twenty five centuries ago [much anterior to all living religions of the world today], that failure on their part to fulfil these obligations towards their children would result in complete shattering away of cordial relationships with them. Obligations do not merely total up to the material gifts and comforts that parents readily provide to their children, relative to or even unmindful of their economic resources. This, we know for certain, is an area in which most parents lamentably err. This material gifting, with the minimum emotional accompaniment, or sometimes none at all, which is **the due recognition** and **acceptance of psychological child-needs** that should go along with it, results in complete catastrophic disasters **with violent breaches of parent-**

child relationships.

These very naturally alienate children from parents and *vice versa*, resulting in extremely pathological situations. It is tragic that such situations are brought before us today with inexcusable frequency. At these late stages in what we would call psychic disintegration and deterioration, both well-wishers and parents are known to advise patients to resort to meditation and religious blessings as corrective measures. But we emphatically maintain that most of these could be averted with **serious acceptance of parenting instructions** in the early days of child growth.

This is where both parents, the mother and the father, have to work as a single unit, without either party arrogating to themselves parenting skills above the other, and without rejecting the other in the presence of the children. These little gestures of humility do indeed pay very large dividends. We pray for a larger dose of sanity in parenting in Sri Lanka today, keeping in mind the Buddhist values on the subject which are inculcated. Those who preach the dhamma today, particularly over the multiple media, need to have a socially acceptable sense of supply and demand, **as to who needs what among our Buddhist listeners to the dhamma**, and also as to who benefits from these extensively carried out preaching, the preachers or those who are being preached to.

We persistently insist on the need of **sensible and humane parenting in the home** because that alone **provides the bed-rock for the growth of children into maturity**, of being men and women who **could take decisions with adequate responsibility and be equally well mindful of the consequences**. We also know for certain that socio-economic exigencies of today, in Sri Lanka in particular, make men and women among the Buddhists, push some of these priorities into the unidentifiable background. They are also at times ill-advised about the possibility of seeking assistance on these issues from strange and mysterious sources. We lament. And they are inevitably called upon to pay a price, sooner or later, which sometimes turns out to be painfully too high.

Before we conclude our studies on the Maṅgala Sutta, we would like to focus attention on a few traits of character on which our Sutta shows serious concern. They are 21-24 and embrace *gāraṇa*, *nivāṇa*, *santutṭhī* and *kataññutā*. We pick them out of the rest because of their very high social relevance. We believe true religiousness comes out of a highly developed social culture which grows from within. It is not imposed through pressure from outside, call it faith or trust. These culture traits have to be properly inculcated among the lay community by genuinely selfless persons who have no eye on personal gain, neither in terms of material returns or publicity and fame. It is with this end in view that the *pañcasīla* is delivered to the world under various names like *pañca-bhayāni* or five dreads on the social community or *pañca-verāni* or five anti-social enmities.

Gāraṇa [No.21] just means respect or respectful behaviour of persons, one to another. The basis of this may be seniority in age, maturity in wisdom or even virtue as an expression of human goodness. Any one of these can be seen as being worthy of respect, of some sort, by the rest of the membership of the social community. In the U.S.A. **respect** has come to be regarded as the foremost virtue to be taught to children in schools, ranking as the first R in the school curriculum. Do not misunderstand or misinterpret this as timid submissiveness which retards the growth of a vibrantly dynamic personality. Far from it. It puts persons in harmonious and warm hearted relationships to one another.

No.22 is *nivāṇa* which is unruffled nature which is not liable to be stormy. It is being calm and gentle and not liable to be easily angered. It is delightful steadfastness of character.

Contentment which is *santutṭhī* [No. 23] in Pali stands for satisfaction with the optimum receipt of one's requirements. One does not think of 'the sky as the limit'. 'Even if heavens send down showers of gold coins, one knows no limit with regard to the enjoyment of pleasures' [*Na kahāpana-vassena titti kāmesu vijjati*] says Buddhist teachings.

Kataññutā [No.24] means gratitude. It means that one feels appreciatively thankful for whatever one gets from another, material or immaterial, that contributes to one's well being. One reciprocates one's feelings of kindness and indebtedness. It gladdens the heart of both the giver and the receiver. In many countries, printed cards expressing one's thanks, very much like greeting cards, which can be sent by post, are available in the market.

Growing up children in the home do need to learn and acquire these virtues direct from their parents. The Maṅgala Sutta aims at assisting the lay community in this process of tutoring and culturing their children. The parents must necessarily find the time for this, in spite of their private and personal joys in life. Being wedded is one thing. But being parents is undoubtedly a wee bit beyond this. Do not try to forget this and bring trouble upon yourself and the rest of society, through the juvenile offenders we generate.

Finally, our request to the community of Buddhist devotees is to get the contents of the Maṅgala Sutta in to their heads and their hearts and deposit your *pirit* cassette or the CD for which you have paid safely somewhere for future reference. Try to live the Sutta in your day to day life [*etādisāni katvāna* = having done these]. If you fail, try to obtain the assistance of the nearest monk within reach who can help you with it, irrespective of his capacity or otherwise for melodious chant. There should be many in your neighbourhood. It is **the spirit of the behavioural action** contemplated in the sutta that matters [once gain *etādisāni katvāna*], and not its mere sound waves from the lips of the chanting monk.

Once this is done and the process completed, one is assured that success would invariably follow his life like night the day [*sabbattham aparājitā sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchantī*]. This is said to be the highest attainable bliss [*Taṃ tesam maṅgalam uttamaṃ*.]



Dhamma Studies Bulletin - No. 5

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Today we resume the continuation of our Dhamma Studies on **the errors of judgement and incorrect behaviour** which we started in No. 3. A Buddhist *upāsaka* or lay devotee errs in his religious life through **his deficiency** or **total absence** of **religious trust** or *saddhā* in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha [*assaddho hoti*]. The second blameable trait of incorrect behaviour is **his lack of**

moral goodness [*dussīlo*]. It is unmistakably asserted all the time that a true Buddhist **must commence his religious life, grounded on moral goodness** [*sīle patitthāya naro sapañño*]. It is this alone in his religion which qualifies a Buddhist to tread the path to total spiritual liberation in Nirvana.

This Buddhist path of moral goodness, particularly at its basic primary level of ***pañcasīla***, undoubtedly has an obvious universal applicability to all mankind on account of its down-to-earth realistic considerations. We wish all religions shared this spirit. But it seems to remain no more than a wish. Quite apart from historical origins of religions, today they show in their practices some vital differences, **perhaps owing to religious sanctions** they have opted to **take upon themselves for diverse reasons**.

This primarily relates to the position of humans in relation to all other forms of life in the universe, large and small. With a theory of creation, most religions which uphold this theory have been driven to believe that man being the supreme product of creation, all else have been created for his use or consumption in some form or another. This **comes into direct conflict with the first precept of the *pañcasīla***, namely respect for all forms of life [*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*]. Killing here may pertain to animals for food and for other experimental purposes like medical and pharmaceutical research.

There is also the much larger killing of humans who are branded as hostile in terms of fanciful religious and communal groupings, for all of which religious groups of today grant religious sanction. In the light of these, it makes very little sense for those who make themselves heard over the media, the Radio and the Television, to say that all religious groups in Sri Lanka sponsor the *pañcasīla* move. We wish they did. To work for a common cause, we need to know our differences and the why of it.

This is an open challenge to the very first Buddhist precept of the *pañcasīla*, namely *pāṇātipātā-veramaṇī*. Mankind world over, apart from religious loyalties,

are **now sensibly changing over to the right of animals to live**. Australia, England, America have very large numbers of converts into this new area of saner thinking. Neither for food nor for luxury items of furs and leather goods would they have their dumb friends slaughtered. We wish all religious groups, in the name of what we meaningfully call religion, would show as much sensitivity to this concept, believing that

`He prayeth best that loveth best
All things both great and small.'

As for the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, and those who champion their cause, both monk and layman, the best they can do is to begin at least with a token expression of their respect for all forms of life. The law of the land, known to everybody to be lamentably dilapidated today, is expected to safeguard the security of at least human life. It is now being justifiably doubted whether it does even this.

When it comes to animals, let it be remembered that their rearing and killing is artfully manipulated in the world today, more in the interest of the few who earn the money thereby than those who are fattened and cheered by the meat supplied. It is even never reckoned with that the medical bills for the ill effects of consuming animal foods is always paid by the consumer. Never by those at the super markets who are your regular suppliers of well-dressed, well-packed meats for your table.

Why not sensitise the Buddhists of their four *poya* days in the month and make them observe them as meat-free vegetarian days. [We have already prepared a 49 day Poya Calendar for you for the year 2004]. Begin by making it a steadfast weekly practice within the family. It will make the heads and hearts of at least a few better than what they are.

As it did happen in the pioneering days of the introduction of Buddhism to

this country, the sponsorship must come from the leaders in the state, from at least a few honest leaders, men and women among them, as well as from the major segment in religion, the clergy, including those escalated to the position of aspiring Buddhas, through the worshipful piety of lay devotees. The **reverential observance of this first precept of respect for life**, starting at least in gradual instalments, **via the Buddhist families**, has to be **a major break through in Buddhist Sri Lanka**.

The underlying ethic of this is **the convinced awareness of self esteem**. In the Kosala Samyutta, the Buddha clarifies this to the king of Kosala [*Evaṃ piyo puthu attā paresaṃ tasmā na hiṃse paraṃ atta-kāmo*. SN. I. 75]. If you know that you love yourself, and that self is dear to you, **no sensible person could deny this to the other, man or animal**. Beware. It is the weaknesses of the world like greed and pride, generated and nurtured via arrogant religious misdirection, which change the colour of our lenses and give us distorted images of the world.

Twenty-five centuries before the U.N. even sensed the need to safeguard the justifiably earned possessions of people under its Human Rights, Buddhism warns against the injustice of dispossessing persons of their harmlessly acquired property [*adinnādānā veramaṇī*]. This ethic of respect for the possessions of others, in peace or in war, again swings back and centres on the concept of human dignity. Man of the world shall suffer no indignity of being looked upon as high or low, superior or inferior, in the partisan process of a preferential creation.

Here again, Buddhism firmly lays down that both the state law [*daṇḍa*] and sound and sensible public opinion [*ananuvajja*] shall deter such violent and shameful acts of dispossession. Do not fail to take serious note that these Buddhist injunctions [contained within the *pañcasīla*] are basics in the moral goodness or *sīla* of the layman in Buddhism. It is much more an awareness and understanding of these social pre-requisites, and not an awe or fear of a divine authority or punishment in a life beyond the present, which provides smoothness to the perfect running of the social machinery.

The third item in the *pañcasīla* listing insists on the refined and cultured attitude of the men in society towards their women, married or unmarried [*kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*]. It is more than tragic and lamentable that many eminent writers on Buddhism, both of the east and the west, monk and layman, insist that this is no more than the Buddhist regulation of the attitude towards the gratification of sensual pleasures [*pañca-kāma*]. We just say R.I.P. and insist that they re-read the relevant texts over again.

This propriety of sex relationships [*methuna-samācāre*], insisting on chastity and conjugal fidelity, apply equally well at all levels [to men, women and children of all ages], of pre-marital and extra-marital intimacies, through force or mutual consent [*sahasā sampiyena vā*]. We are of the opinion that victims of incidents of STD and AIDS towards whom we are justifiably asked to show sympathy and compassion have unfortunately missed the sober and saner instructions with regard to the permissible gratification of sex desires. Let it be known that the forewarned are forearmed and the tragic disasters for which world wide sympathy is invoked could be averted.

Honesty in word and deed, in all social transactions, is envisaged under the fourth precept [*musāvādā veramaṇī*]. Reliability and transparency in action are all parts of this fundamental virtue of honesty. Finally comes abstinence from the use of alcoholic drinks and drugs which impair the soundness of judgement of humans, of men, women and children of all climes and all times [*yaṃ pivitvā visaññī assa*]. It is to be noted that what comes under scrutiny of this precept here are not only intoxicating drinks. It also covers whatever else that bring intoxication. The word *pāna* which comes from the verb *pibati* [= drinks] is also used with smoking as in *dūma pāna*. Also note *duṃ bīma*. Hence this precept undoubtedly covers both alcoholic drinks and intake of drugs.

Having highlighted the degeneracy of human life, brought about through the breakdown of moral goodness or *sīla* in the world, caused often on account of self-assumed arrogance on the one hand and pitifully massive ignorance of the

basic values about life on the other. These, in all cases, are serious blunders in our living style in society. It is little realised that this decadence tears apart the smoothness of the social fabric in the human community.

The dhamma warnings about **errors in human behaviour** which we have picked up for discussion from the Anguttara Nikaya now highlight two areas of erratic vision of humans with regard to what they believe and look upon to be **auspicious or luck-bringing to mankind**. This is the ancient Indian concept of *maṅgala*. The basis of this seems to be no more than mystic and magical and we are compelled to believe that these items are dredged from a world of make-believe.

Situations which are manipulated and are strategically contrived according to preconceived patterns, like meeting a young damsel with flowers or a vessel of water in her hand as one steps out to go on an important journey, are believed to bring about good luck. Similarly bad omens like the sight of a widow or a beggar are believed to bring about bad luck. Such beliefs in sights and sounds are listed as *kotūhala-maṅgala*. A believer in such items or a *kotūhala-maṅgaliko* is looked upon as a degenerate Buddhist.

Such a person relies solely on the benefits of such superstitious or magically contrived situations and not on productive action of his own initiative. He is described as being *maṅgalaṃ pacceṭi no kammaṃ*. These two items are specifically listed as being severely corrosive on the religiousness of a Buddhist, making him a *upāsaka-caṇḍāla*, i.e. an outcast, an alien in Buddhism.

Finally in the list of menacing situations which lead to the **shattering and disintegration of the religiousness of a Buddhist** is his being **stealthily roped into the religious arenas of completely alien religious creeds** who are basically polarised in their religious beliefs. Not very different to the concept of free love in married life in the world today, or to the world wide enjoyment of extra-marital sex everywhere, it is noticeable that Buddhists of Sri Lanka too are very openly

wooing divinities of completely different faiths, lured by many attractions. Outside their own creed of Buddhism, **they look out for personalities, divine or human, whom they could honour and pay obeisance to and make offerings thereunto** [*ito bahiddhā dakkhiṇeyyaṃ gavesati tattha ca pubbakāraṃ karotī*].

They vociferously disclaim any pressure or persuasion from the enticing sectors. They endeavour to make out that they apparently work with their own convictions. They triumphantly claim, on the other hand, that it is the discovery of glamour and grandeur elsewhere which they have not been able to see in Buddhism. Or it is more likely the possibility of divinely granted material gains which they cannot claim while being within the fold of Buddhism. With these people, possibly or even undeniably, the telescope is on the blind eye. In terms of true Buddhist teachings, these people shall gather their harvests according to what they have sown [*Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ*]. Doers of good shall gather a harvest that is wholesome [*kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ*], and the evil doers, one that is evil [*pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ*].

Our endeavour in this essay has been to safeguard the religious edifice of the Buddhist. To show him the bed rock on which to securely lay his multi-dimensional religious foundation. This is for a long range trans-samsāric happiness and not for an extra ration of bread and butter for domestic consumption. Let it be remembered that having shattered your religious citadel with the inroads of unauthorised demolition squads on your own invitation, it is you who have to find your re-builders from elsewhere through your own seeking.



Dhamma Studies Bulletin - No. 6

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Our Dhamma Studies today will centre on the subject **Down-to-Earth Elevation of Human Life in the direction of Nirvana.** Everyone of us must immediately sense the vastness of the span that lies between **down-to-earth human life** at one end and **Nirvana** at the other. The endeavour of Buddhism is no more than to bridge these two polarised ends, without the grace or assistance of any body besides man himself. We believe it does not need much narrative to indicate how irritating and devastating life in the world can be to people. But people do not have adequate vision to collectively feel this until disasters like deaths in suicides, motor car accidents or incredibly unsuspected incidents of illnesses like cancer or Aids mercilessly batter them personally.

The first segment in the definition of *dukkha* [or **unsatisfactoriness in our very life process**] presented in our classic sermon of the Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana

Sutta puts it graphically and comprehensively as *jāti 'pi dukkhā jarā ' pi dukkhā vyādhi ' pi dukkhā maraṇam ' pi dukkham*, i.e. that commencing with birth itself, decay, disease and death in one's life bring unhappiness in their wake. This is all part of the reality of the world. **This alone is real** and the ceaseless repetition of this through samsāra is equally real, and we come to know it through medical reports as well as through the word of the Buddha. Therefore no man with any sanity in his head would hesitate to look for a way out of it [*imassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nissaraṇam na paññāyetha*].

This is the inheritance of man on account of being human. As long as one is born to life, these concomitants will invariably follow [*jāti-paccayā jarā-maraṇam*]. It is Nirvana alone which will terminate these. But their intensity may be reduced by man by regulating his reactions to these situations as in the case of Paṭācārā's revised attitude to the death of her infant son under the guidance of the Buddha, i.e. by gaining the conviction that there would be no home in the land where no death has occurred.

Besides these surging grieves and lamentations which arise out of the inevitable changes of the physical body, [in its passage through time and space in samsāra], the Buddha clearly indicates a very large segment of psychopathic disturbances which again are no more than human creations of maladjustment to situations. They do not exist in the world as such on their own. They are primarily born of human relationships, of one to another. We make our own choices as to whom among men and women we like and whom we dislike [*piyarūpe rūpe sārājati appiyarūpe rūpe virajati*].

Any challenge to or contradictions of these, like being brought into the company of those whom we detest and dislike or being separated from those whom we intensely like, are reckoned to be both equally painful [*appiyehi sampayogo dukkho piyehi vippayogo dukkho*]. In our likes and dislikes of things, if humans could only develop a dignified sense of detachment, and eliminate submission and resistance in the area of these sensory stimuli [*anurodha-*

virodham], there would indeed be less painful situations in the process of living and much less provision of fuel for the prolongation of the process of *samsaric* continuance, of being born again and again.

In a brief but overall summing up of this life sustaining process, it is said that normal human responses of grabbing at all the sensory stimuli provided by the world or *upādāna* generate painful results. It is painful for two main reasons in that unfulfilled desires bring about the painful result of frustration and contributes to the more painful *samsaric* continuance. This unskilled communication of grabbing at the world called *upādāna* generates the fountain head of life called *bhava* [*upādāna paccayā bhavo*].

Those in the world who have been tutored and instructed through various pedagogies to view with distrust the multi-dimensional attitude to human life and see it as being only a product, sandwiched between birth and death, are known not to worry about what happens after death. Buddhism uses this extra vision, and not a fear of punishment, to direct human life in an acceptably decent and cultured way, being mindful of the ill effects of its opposite in this very life. It must clearly be mentioned here that the wish for the termination of all ills of life in Nirvana requires the elevation of human life in this very existence. All values in life and all activities of man has to be upgraded for this purpose. This, in other words, boils down to moral **goodness** in living.



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Besides this segment of grooming in the area which we would clearly and unmistakably designate as religious, Buddhism also shows interest in an indispensably large area of social propriety and decorum. Being social does not necessarily mean that these corrections in our patterns of living are necessarily external to the spiritual growth of the human, man or woman. We are compelled to observe that they all lead in the direction of Nirvana. To say the least, they are Nirvana-oriented. Even Buddhist monastic discipline or the Vinaya which bears an essentially legal character, gives clear evidence of the acceptance of both these areas under *abhisamācārikā sikkhā* or socially oriented discipline dealing with the relations of the monk with the laymen and *ādibrahmacariyikā sikkhā* or

transcendental discipline leading to Nirvana [*brahmacariya-anuggahāyā*].

Among the vast collection of Buddhist admonitions which endeavour to correct **degrading patterns of human behaviour**, the Vasala and Parābhava Suttas of the Suttanipāta [Sn. pp.21-5 and Sn. pp. 18-20 respectively] rank foremost. The title of the Vasala indicates that those despicable patterns of human conduct listed therein reduces the status of a man in society to the lowest in social esteem, i.e. to one of an outcaste or *vasala*. In terms of behavioural norms, he is a total reject.

Being **inimical and given to anger** [*kodhano upanāhī ca*. Sn. v. 116] almost heads the list of such **behavioural decadence**. As a very close adjunct of this comes the **lack of love and concern for all forms of life** [... *yo' dha pāṇāni hiṃsati yassa pāṇe dayā natthi*. ibid. 117]. It is amazing how large numbers of western thinkers today, both men and women, in spite of the religious beliefs into which they are born, are now changing over to this position of respect for life.

Over the millennia, the scientifically and industrially developed modern world, particularly of the west has gradually divorced and alienated itself from the traditional values of religion. The family, world over, has gone to wreck and ruin on account of the breakdown of mutual trust within it. Lured more by fancies of extra-marital sex relations [known to be overwhelmingly approved by many societies of today], the human home as a healthy nursery for the growth and nurture of mankind, has miserably failed in its functioning. Conjugal fidelity is conveniently reduced to an old world myth. Prayers on that issue are assuredly known to fall on deaf ears. On the other hand, we are repeatedly requested by the very generous and compassionate media today to show sympathy to STD and Aids victims.

Buddhist teachings, anticipating as it were more than twenty-five centuries ago this lamentable decadence today of the wellness and solidarity of marriage, provides adequate warnings and safeguards to secure and ensure for mankind

the balmy and soothing benefits of well organised married life in the human community. Married life, together with its blissfully rewarding reproductive process which goes hand in hand with it, is to be viewed with a clearer vision, without a beam across in one's eye. Perverse and distorted views about it, marketed by new global departments of study and research, without any prior laboratory testing, as it were, has resulted in utter chaos, yielding unthinkably lamentable situations like unmarried others, single parent homes, juvenile delinquency, criminal abortions etc. etc.

Both the Vasala and the Parābhava Suttas we have referred to above take adequate warning of this disaster which wrecks marriages. Breaches in the honesty of marital relations, through pressure from either party or mutual consent is viewed with severe disdain [*taṃ jaññā vasalo iti* - Vasala Sutta at Sn. v. 123]. In the circles of friends and relations [*yo ñātīnaṃ sakhānaṃ vā*], one shall not be guilty of adulterous behaviour [*paradāresu dissati*]. Neither pressure nor mutual consent [*sahasā sampiyena vā*] shall provide any ground for excuse for misbehaviour in this damnable area. The Parābhava Sutta at Sn. v. 108, making a closer scrutiny of such situations, traces it to dissatisfaction and incompatibility in sex life in the home [*sehi dārehi asantuṭṭho*] and points out both the consequent adulterous behaviour and resorting to prostitutes [*dissati paradāresu and vesiyāsu padissati*]. All the same, it is insisted upon that such behaviour are causes of degeneracy and decline in [*taṃ parābhavato mukhaṃ*].

Before we conclude we should also add that in the original teachings of early Buddhism great stress is laid on the **esteem and veneration** in which **humans shall hold their religions and their religious personnel**. Religions were never looked upon by the Buddhists as down-to-earth enrolment camps **for the build-up of world encompassing kingdoms in the heavens above**. Humans shall be religious or spiritually good [if you choose to use a less aggressive term in the world today] **to be acceptably good in the midst of life in the world**, both human and animal, animate and inanimate. This is the direction in which the more

advanced and rational thinking in the world is moving **for peace on earth and goodwill among men**, i.e. that man shall not bring about its dooms day [See works like **Biophilia Hypothesis**, edited by Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson].

Parābhava Sutta [at Sn. v.100] requests people in society to be honest in their dealings with their religious men [*Yo brāhmaṇaṃ vā samaṇaṃ vā aññaṃ vā pi vaṇibbakaṃ musāvādena vañceti tam parābhavato mukhaṃ*]. Vasala Sutta [at Sn. v.134] points it out as being despicable behaviour for men in society to be virulent and harsh towards the Buddha or his disciples [*Yo buddham paribhāsati atha vā tassa sāvakaṃ*]. This injunction includes religious personnel of other faiths as well [*paribbājaṃ gahaṭṭhaṃ vā taṃ jaññā vasalo iti*].

In Buddhism, this came to be such a time honoured tradition that it is seen to be beautifully saddled among the seven **conditions that arrest social decay among the humans** and boldly labelled as *satta aparihāniyā dhammā*. In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta [at DN. II. p. 75] it is presented in an essentially Buddhist garb where we are specifically told that if the Vajjis as a group of people with an identity of their own are to arrest social decay and remain invincible should among a total of seven conditions which arrest social decay [*satta aparihāniyā dhammā*] continue to honour and support their religious edifices and institutions [*yāni tāni Vajjīnaṃ Vajji-cetiyaṇi ... tāni sakkaronti...*] and make life very comfortable and welcome to their religious men [*kin'ti anāgatā ca arahanto vijitaṃ āgaccheyyūṃ...phāsu vihareyyun'ti*].

We would be happy to conclude this session of Dhamma Studies, indicating the feasibility of utilising the urge of religiousness in man [hoping that there is a genuine guarantee of its existence still within man] primarily for the upgrading of man here in this very life and invariably for the launching of his spiritual ascent as a reward for his transcendental aspirations.



Dhamma Studies Bulletin - No. 8

[This is meant to be a regular hand-out to our Buddhist parents to familiarise themselves and their children with **Buddhist ways of thinking**, coupled with **Buddhist ways of living**. When you receive it, start on it without undue delay, to read and understand it yourself. Then **pass over to your children even a little bit of these ideas at a time**. See whether you and your children can live respecting these ideas and in conformity with these. If you have any difficulty in doing so by yourself, please try joining a few families in the neighbourhood and jointly putting these ideas to good use. We wish you good luck and thank you in anticipation for your co-operation.].

Under the Guidance of My Master - The Buddha

[HE IS THE TEACHER OF ALL TERRESTRIAL AND EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL BEINGS]

Namo = My adoration

tassa Bhagavato Arahato = to the Buddha who is the Worthy One

Sammā Sambuddhassa = who is the Fully Enlightened One.

Say these words thrice with awareness, understanding and conviction
at least every morning before you start the day.

As a Buddhist and as a simple down-to-earth teacher of Buddhism, I am trying hard to gain the conviction that some of our earlier Dhamma Studies based on the analysis of the *parittas* is bringing Buddhism closer to the lives of people. That the **Buddhists are endeavouring to live in terms of what is laid down in their religion**. There is not only something definitely Buddhist in the *parittas* in their

contents, if you know how to choose what is really worthwhile [and not to prevent your son or daughter, through the chanting of the Jalanandana Pirita, from marrying a partner whom the family rejects]. There is also something Buddhist about them. It is regrettable that the same cannot be said of all items which are gone through during an all night ceremony of chanting. Who can judge the good from the bad when the only faculty the participating audience is called upon to exercise **is only listening in** and **not necessarily understanding**.

If one is to seriously benefit from the *parittas* and derive the maximum out of them, one has to be selective and exercise some judgement between what is more organic to the creed and therefore contribute to the enhancement of the human personality and those less organic. Some of the latter like the Suriya and Canda Parittas, the Mora Paritta and even the Dhajagga, with their semi-legendary old- world narratives, dealing with solar and lunar eclipses etc. etc., provide more theatrical entertainment than religious awe. One would indeed discover such heterogeneity in all religious literature of mankind, with varying degrees of emphasis and importance. The Buddhists, knowing the role of religion in their lives, need very much more to be discriminating and be forewarned about this.

Some of the more **genuinely** popular *parittas* like the Maṅgala, Ratana and Metta Suttas [the triad in the Sinhala *tun sūtraya*] are traceable back to Canonical texts, though not necessarily to texts of the earliest stratum. Their subject matter in themselves have a basic religious relevance too, as in the case of the Ratana Sutta, which extols the incomparable virtues of the *Tisaraṇa*, namely the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. The Ratana Sutta, we find to be one of the finest sources of inspiration and an excellent base for the veneration of the Buddha as our one and only Master.

The dazzling monks who eminently roam around in various circles today in Sri Lanka would find it difficult to provide true leadership in the direction of Nirvana. Make sure that their radar is set correct to serve your purpose, if you

have yourselves chosen your target wisely. The silent murmur of my heart always echoes these words of the Sutta: *Yaṃ kiñci vittaṃ idha vā huraṃ vā saggesu vā 'yaṃ ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ Na no samaṃ atthi tathāgatena. Idam 'pi Buddhhe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ.* You must remember that it means that 'In this vast cosmic scene, whether down here on earth or in the heavens above, there is no treasure that equals the Buddha in its worth. This is the grandeur of the Buddha.'

With this mindset about our Buddha who, we know, was born in India, lived in India and passed away into *parinirvāna* in India [dismissing, as we are determined to do, the callous use by some Indologists of the word *Hindu* for Indian in this context], we should have no difficulty whatsoever in getting the historical Buddha Sakyamuni to pervade through a realm of infinite time and infinite space. This is the emergence in the Mahayana of the Cosmic or Universal Buddha Amida, well and truly out of early Buddhist conceptualisation. Amitābhah is none other than Buddha infinitely stretching through light or space and Amitāyuh stretching through time. This is how and why some of the leading Japanese scholars, more than thirty years ago, came to admit, with a remarkable degree of honesty, that Sakyamuni is the Eternal Buddha. He is made to be so. He well deserves that honour and esteem.

If any Buddhists of today are wise or clever enough to be Buddhists without any affiliation to these three items of the *Tisarāṇa*, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, we would very generously take time off to pray for the repose of their souls. One can certainly be sure that they would invariably be polygamously wedded to more than one religious leader secretly in order to pilot their lives to their aspired goals of prosperity and splendour.



Dhamma Studies Bulletin - No. 9

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Today we take up for study the last of the *parittas* of the *Tun Sūtra* or the **Triad Collection**, namely the Metta Sutta [or Karaṇīyametta Sutta as it is also sometimes called in Commentaries like the Catubhāṇavāra Aṭṭhakathā]. It is to be remembered that all these three suttas are traceable back to the Suttanipāta, though not to its earliest stratum. The main theme of the Metta Sutta, as far as the text reveals, is the development of universal loving kindness or *mettā* [i.e. a spirit of friendliness or non-hostility / *averam̐ asapattam̐*]. It is universal in that it embraces with love all living things, man, bird and beast, without any discrimination: *anavasesā ... sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā* = May all beings,

without leaving out any as human or animal, friend or foe, be well and happy.

The two major points to be noted about this very miniature *paritta* in the *Tun Sūtra* collection consists firstly of a very brief prescription **for those who wish to make a success of their lives, through personality development** [*karaṇīyaṃ atthakusalena*] **for the attainment of their spiritual goal of Nirvana** [*yaṃ taṃ santam padam abhisamecca*]. Secondly, the Sutta categorically declares that the basic cultivation of the virtue of *mettā* **ultimately leads to the termination in Nirvana of the samsāric process of being born again and again** [*na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punar eti ti.*].

Viewing the sutta from this angle, we are a little dismayed at what we would choose to refer to as a Commentarial misdirection which endeavours to present the sutta as having its origin in an attempt by the Buddha to win the goodwill of the irritated and angered *devatās* of the forest tract where a group of monks are said to have gone to spend their rains' retreat. On account of the presence on the ground below of these spiritually edified monks, the tree-resident *devatās* are said to have been compelled to descend with their children to the ground below. They are said to have been very much angered at this and attempted to drive away the monks by terrorising them with hideous sounds and sights. The Buddha is then said to have offered this *paritta* as a multipurpose remedial measure for protection [*parittattham*], for developing loving kindness [*mettattham*] and for attaining a *jhāna* via which one could develop *vipassanā* [*vipassanāpādakajhānattham* - Catubhāṇavāraṭṭhakathā / SHB. P.126].

Let us now return to the text of the *paritta* itself.

